

THE VISIONS OF HANDSOME LAKE

BY RAY FADDEN*
(*Aren Akweks*)

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

There is but one Indian reservation in Pennsylvania, the Cornplanter Tract on the banks of the Allegheny River in Warren County. This bit of Seneca land is a reminder to us how deeply interwoven Pennsylvania history is with the history of the Iroquois Confederacy. It is a reminder also that we in the Keystone State share with the Empire State responsibility for preserving our Iroquois heritage.

When William Penn first arrived, the Indians in Pennsylvania all lived under the Iroquois aegis. During the later colonial period, Iroquois vice-regents, such as Shickellamy and Tanacharisson stationed at the Forks of the Susquehanna and of the Ohio, saw to it that Iroquois sovereignty was effectively maintained. During the French and Indian War the Iroquois, though officially neutral, brought Teedyuscung to heel at the Easton Treaty of 1758 and so helped to end the Indian war on Pennsylvania's borders. During the Revolution, the Iroquois Confederacy, after two years of non-interference, decided to allow each of its six member nations to choose its own course. Following that decision, the Senecas inflicted on us a severe defeat at Wyoming, which was avenged the following year by General Sullivan. The Oneidas, on the other hand, gave George Washington conspicuous help at Valley Forge in the spring of 1778.

When the war was over, Cornplanter, a Seneca Indian who had fought against the United States, accepted the verdict of battle, and strove to persuade his people to follow him in a policy of peaceful co-existence with the people of the Thirteen Council Fires. In gratitude for these efforts, which were as beneficial to the white people as they were to the members of his own race, Congress granted to him and to his descendants forever the land surrounding his town of Jenuchshadego on the Allegheny. These river lands

*Ray Fadden (*Aren Akweks*), a Mohawk of the Wolf Clan, is secretary of the Akwesasne Mohawk Counselor Organization, school teacher, member of the Longhouse, author, and lecturer. He became interested in Iroquois history when he discovered that his Mohawk Boy Scout troop knew so little about the background of their own people. To remedy that defect, he has written and illustrated many pamphlets, including *Sa-ko-ri-on-nie-ni, Our Great Teacher* (Handsome Lake), *Formation of the Ho-de-no-sau-ne or League of the Five Nations*, *History of the St. Regis Akwesasne Mohawks*, and a *Key to Indian Pictographs*. With the help of his boys, he has recently built and equipped a Six Nations Museum at Onchiota in the Adirondacks.

remain today the best memorial in Pennsylvania to the great Iroquois Confederacy out of whose territories the Keystone State has been carved.

"The great Iroquois Confederacy." Does this numerically-small people, broken up as they now are in a number of reservations in the United States and Canada, deserve such a title? If you doubt it, recall the recent shifts in leadership among the world's great powers, and be reminded that a nation's greatness is not a matter of absolute size and wealth, but is to be estimated in relation to its environment, which is constantly changing. The population of England, for instance, during the nineteenth century was much smaller than it is today; yet during most of that century England was the foremost world power, whereas today, despite the increase in her population and the rise in her standard of living, she yields place to the American giant.

In William Penn's day the Iroquois, though at that time no greater in numbers than they are today (not more than fifteen thousand men, women, and children), were unquestionably the greatest power in this part of the world. Not only did they hold good title to most of the land comprised in Penn's grant from the King of England, but their viceroys ("half kings," our ancestors called them) and their war parties maintained stability over an area comparable in size to the ancient Roman Empire. However small their numbers may now seem (in comparison, that is, with the white newcomers who occupy most of their country), they have cause enough for pride in memories of a time when their diplomatic wampum belts circulated from the Atlantic Ocean to beyond the Mississippi River and from Hudson Bay to Florida.

In all the ups and downs of Iroquois national life, two events stand out, marking the sharpest turning points in their history. One is the founding of the Confederacy: the bringing together by Deganawidah and Hiawatha of five weak nations into a union—loose in appearance but psychologically sound and therefore effective—that made them all but invincible. The other is the career of Handsome Lake.

Skaniadariyo, or "Handsome Lake," was a chief of the Turtle Clan in the Seneca nation. He came on to the national scene in the darkest days of his people's history, a time when they were so oppressed by the greed, and duplicity of the white people who swarmed about them that they had all but given up the struggle for national existence and resigned themselves to forgetfulness in the rum bottle. Handsome Lake roused them with a new gospel of hope. He restored their self-respect and prepared the way for an Iroquois renaissance.

The Deganawidah-Hiawatha episode belongs, geographically at least, to New York State, where its individual incidents took place. The Handsome Lake episode, on the other hand, belongs to Pennsylvania. It was on the Cornplanter Tract in 1799 and 1800 that Handsome Lake had his visions, visions in which messengers from the Creator presented him with the Good Word, *Gaiwiiio*, which he in turn was instructed to convey to his fellow nationals.

The story of Handsome Lake is no mere stuff of dreams, but has solid historical proportions. The prophet found solutions for the local problems of his people, and succeeded in giving them a national rebirth. The story of his career is devoutly preserved by a large number of the Iroquois today. It is taught in the Longhouses. It inspires the thinking and provides an artistic outlet for many of their finest people.

Among Handsome Lake's present followers, Mr. Ray Fadden (*Aren Akweks*), a school teacher living on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation in New York State, has this year put the story of the prophet into striking and beautiful form. He has strung beads of colored glass, like the wampum made of shell beads by his ancestors, in the symbolic patterns of ancient Indian pictography (with adaptations to meet his individual needs), and so depicted the career and visions of Handsome Lake.

At the request of the editor of PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY, Mr. Fadden has translated his wampum, symbol by symbol, for our readers. For most of them, it will serve as an introduction to the striking and powerful figure who is chiefly responsible for the Iroquois renaissance of a century and a half ago. Those who wish to pursue the subject further may do so in the late Dr. Arthur Parker's work entitled, *The Code of Handsome Lake* (Albany, 1913). See also "The Religion of Handsome Lake: Its Origin and Development," by Merle H. Deardorff (*Symposium on Local Diversity in Iroquois Culture*, edited by William N. Fenton: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 149); and "Halliday Jackson's Journal to the Seneca Indians, 1798-1800," edited by Anthony F. C. Wallace, PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY, Vol. XIX, Nos. 2 and 3 (April and July, 1952). The present version is a fair abridgement of the larger narrative. We are privileged to present it in the words of a living member of the Longhouse.

It will be noticed in the text below that the followers of Handsome Lake, like the followers of Mohammed, revere Jesus. Indeed, the Indians find in the Cross a symbol of the persecution they as a race have suffered since the white man's coming to this continent. The Iroquois have a legend—not, however, in the Handsome Lake canon—in which Deganawidah, whose message of Peace and Power laid the foundation of the Confederacy, shows to friends the mark of the nails in his hands and feet.

THIS is the story of the great prophet of the Senecas, the People of the Mountain.

Many years ago, the Seneca people lived beside the Beautiful River, the Genesee. At that time there was born among them a boy of the clan of the Wolf.* They named him Skaniadariyo, Handsome Lake. This was at a time when the White Men came

*He was later adopted by the Turtle Clan, and became a Turtle sachem.



THE BEAD RECORD OF HANDSOME LAKE

Ray Fadden (left), John Fadden (right).

to the Seneca country and by force of arms and other pressure forced the Senecas to leave their beautiful land. With sad hearts they followed the trail toward the setting sun. Some went to a place called Buffalo Creek. Some went to a place called Tonawanda. Some went to Cattaraugus. One band went down to the mountain country along the Ohio. There they built a settlement at Allegany and another south of it on the Cornplanter Tract in Pennsylvania.

In that time long ago, no one had ever told the Indian people that drinking was evil. And so they used to get their furs, their meat, and other things to trade with, and loaded them into their canoes. They would paddle down the Ohio [Allegheny] River to the white man's town of Pittsburgh, and there they would trade their furs and meat for the White Man's firewater. This happened many times, and many people were killed under the influence of liquor. Some were drowned and others were murdered. Their minds became crazy, drinking that stuff. On the way home, it was the custom to lash their canoes together, the sober Indians paddling on the outside, while those who were drunk lay in the inside canoe with the liquor. The people in the villages to which they were returning knew what to expect. They had had experience before with Indians who had been to the White Man's town. They knew these Indians would be drunk and wild in their heads. So they left the village and went into the forest, some here, some there. Soon in the forest you could see smoke coming up, single smokes from the campfires of different families, waiting for their people, their young men, to get sober. The dogs roamed about the village, howling. The cabin fires were stamped out and the kettles were overturned. Everywhere drunken people roamed about, some with weapons, killing. All this was under the influence of liquor.

Handsome Lake grew to be a man. He was like the rest of the Seneca people of that time. He loved the white man's firewater. He often returned drunk to his village, Cornplanter's Town. When he was drunk, he did things that were not right, singing the sacred songs, the Harvest Song, the Great Feather Dance Song. He offended the Creator. Because he did such things he became very ill. He became so sick that he had to go to bed. He lay there for four years, a helpless invalid. The flesh melted away from his body. He was like a bundle of bones.

He lay there, day after day. Sometimes, when night came, he would look up and see the moon, the stars. He would think to himself: "How beautiful the moon, how beautiful the stars. Never before have I thought about these things. Our Creator put those in the sky for us." And he would thank the Creator who put the stars and the moon in the sky. He did not think he could live another day, so he begged the Creator to give him strength to see the stars just once more.

During the day the birds were singing. He would think: "Our Creator put those here to make us happy. How beautiful the thrush is. I wish I could live to see another day. I wish I could get well again. Out of the swamp I hear the frogs. I hear the wind blowing through the trees. I hear the river outside, talking." All these things he thought of, and all gave him pleasure. He thanked God for all of them. In the daytime the warm sun warmed his whole body. He thanked God that the warm sun was there. He thanked Our Creator for all these things.

At the end of four years, one day when his daughter and her husband were outside the bark house shelling beans, they heard the old man say in Seneca, "*Niyoh*—All right." They looked up, and to their surprise they saw their father stagger out of the house. He fell on his face. They walked over to him. He was dead.

They had been expecting it. So the daughter said to her husband, "Go and tell his family that the One Who Has Been Ill So Long* has now passed on." By his family, she meant those of his clan, the Turtle Clan. While her husband went to gather the dead man's family and announce his death, she went in and prepared her father for burial. He was a chief, and she put the ceremonial costume on. Then his clan came, and they sat around the body. No one spoke. No one said anything. It was a time of unhappiness. One of their leaders was gone. They sat there all night long.

The sun came up in the east. When the sun was half way up in the sky, Skaniadariyo surprised everyone by sitting up. He had come back to life. His people spoke to him. They said, "How do you feel, how do you feel?" They were amazed to see a man come back to life after he had died.

*It was an Iroquois custom never to refer by name to a person who had just died.

Skaniadariyo spoke, but at first no words came. His lips moved but they could hear no sound. After a time he recovered enough to be able to speak out loud. He said: "I have seen wonderful things. I lay there in bed, thinking of this and that, and then I heard a strong voice, a commanding voice, outside of the bark house, say, 'Arise, come out!' I did not know how I could get up—I had not been on my feet for so long, I was so weak. But I wanted to go. I could not resist that strong voice. When the voice repeated itself, I had no resistance. I arose and walked out of the bark house. And there I saw three wonderful-appearing men, handsome men, old-time people. They were dressed as Indians dressed long ago. In one hand they held bows which they seemed to be using as canes, and in the other hand huckleberry bushes. The berries were of all colors. They said to me, 'Eat these and you will gain back your strength. And a certain medicine man and woman will prepare a medicine for you. If you drink that medicine, you will completely regain your strength.' "

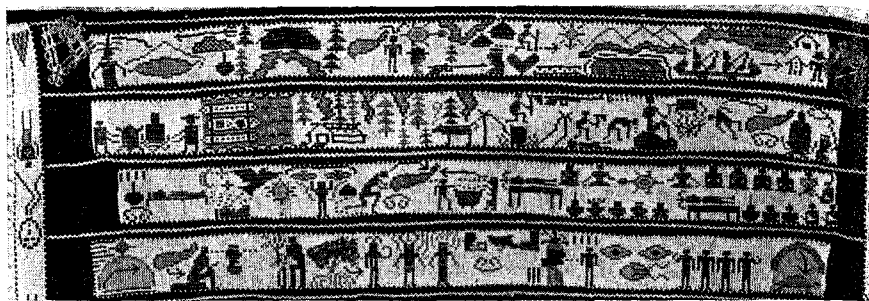
Next day the medicine man and woman made the medicine, as the Three Messengers had said. He took it and recovered.

Meantime in the vision, the Three Messengers said to Handsome Lake: "There are four of us. The Fourth Messenger has gone back to tell Our Creator that we managed to reach you. We have tried to reach others, but we could not get to them. You will see the Fourth Messenger some day. When your time comes to leave this earth, he will lead you to the land of Our Creator. We are messengers of God. The Creator will speak to you through us. He will tell His mind and His heart to us, the Four Messengers. We will tell you, and you are to tell your people. That is the way *Gaiwiio*, the Good Word, comes. This is the order: the Messengers speak to Handsome Lake, and Handsome Lake speaks to the *Ongwe-honwe*, the Iroquois.

"It is now the time of Thanksgiving," continued the Messengers. "Your people are thanking God for the strawberry plant. They are having the proper dances and prayers in His honor. Tell your people that they are to continue these thanksgivings, that it pleases the Creator in the sky that you recognize Him and thank Him in this manner. Continue to do these Indian things."

The Messengers said: "Look. Now tell us what you see."

Skaniadariyo looked. He saw a valley. The hot sun was over-



THE THREE MESSENGERS

The wampum belt, nearly eighty feet in length, has been divided into sections and attached to a cloth for backing. The first four sections, shown above, carry the story down to the arrival of the Messengers from the Creator. Handsome Lake has the same name as Lake Ontario (Oniatara, lake, io, great or beautiful; i.e., Handsome Lake). A sketch of the lake, accordingly, serves the artist as a symbol of the Prophet's name.

Courtesy American Philosophical Society

head. There was a pit in the center of the valley, and out of the pit came smoke and hot vapor. He heard moaning from the pit. Handsome Lake told the Messengers what he saw. They said to him: "Buried in that pit is an earth-man. We asked him to deliver the Good Word, the *Gaiwio*, to his people, and he would not. His punishment is to remain there forever."

After the Messengers had left him and he had recovered his strength, Handsome Lake spoke at the Council and said: "This is what the Great One says: 'You have gone to the white man's towns. You have seen the white man drink firewater. You think the white man is so smart, he knows everything, so it must be all right to drink liquor. You have imitated the white man in this. Whenever you can, you get liquor and you drink it, and your minds become crazy. You think if the white man does it, it must be all right with you. It is not all right for Indians to drink liquor. It was made for the white men across the ocean, and made for them only to be used as a medicine. It was not intended for Indians. The Evil Spirit has sent it over here to help destroy the Indians. When you hear this message, you are to spill the liquor on the earth and never to touch it again. It is poison.'

"Now, some of you have Power. Through suggestion and a certain craft, you cause people to become sick, sick in their minds and in their bodies. By witchcraft you can even cause death. Those who have that Power are to cease using it. There is a special

punishment after death for those who use their Power to harm mankind.

"Some of you have certain charms, parts of animals and other things, which also have Power. You know what I mean. The Creator did not give any man Power to use over another man. To use those charms in that way to hurt mankind is evil. Cease doing it. Destroy those bundles."

* * *

[In a long passage which can here be only summarized, different kinds of sin and sinners are denounced: the woman who practices abortion; the man who deserts his wife to follow another woman; the husband and wife who are jealous of each other for their children's love; the jealous mother-in-law; the man who, in drink, plays roughly with his children. Parables are employed to illustrate certain precepts.]

"Always treat the aged with respect. They have the wisdom of many winters."



HANDSOME LAKE

Telling a young man to honor and respect his parents.

Drawn by Ka-he-ro-ton

"Listen to what children say. Their minds and hearts are pure."

"Never strike a woman. In the eyes of the Creator, she is as tall as a man, but no taller."

"Never strike a child. If he will not listen to reason, blow water in his face or duck his head in the river."

"If the Creator has blest you with special gifts, thank him but do not boast."

"Share what you have with the sick and injured."

"Let some of your young men learn to read and write, that you

may know what the white man's paper-talk says. You have lost much land because you did not know how to read and write."

"Some of the things the white man has are good. He has a good house and a nice barn. He raises cattle, pigs, and chickens so that if anything happens to him his family will have something to fall back on. Imitate the white man in that, but do not overdo it. Be satisfied with enough."

"Chiefs should think of their people and not of themselves. And they should think not only of those living today, but also of unborn generations."

"The leaders of the people, at every council meeting, should thank Our Creator for all things: for the earth and what is above—the sun, moon, and stars in the sky."

"The Tormentor [the Devil] will try to keep you from entering the Longhouse to thank the Creator. Do not listen to him. Go to the Longhouse. It makes no difference if you cannot talk, if you cannot take part in the dances. The Creator knows you are there."

"There are three grades of sin: the sins of chiefs, the sins of religious leaders, the sins of the common people. The greater the office, the greater the sin."

* * *

"Now some of you have laughed at the desires of the Creator," continued Handsome Lake. "You say that there is no harm in strong drink. The man who says that does not know what he is talking about. So let there be a contest. Let a certain number of Indian people have a feast. Some will eat the right food—corn, beans, and squash, and food of that nature—while others will drink the white man's firewater. When the feast is over, you will see that those who drank the firewater have killed one or more of their number, while those who ate the good food are well and clear in their minds.

"The white men are all around you and have their eyes on you, but have no fear. The Creator watches from above and will protect His Indian people. Though persecuted, you will never be destroyed by the white man.

"The Creator is angry with some of you. You have done a terrible thing. You have been ashamed that you are Indians. When you see our people performing the sacred dances or singing the sacred songs in thanks to the Creator, you have laughed and made fun of them. The man who does that can never go to the Land of Happy Spirits.

"The Creator in the sky is unhappy. He is in conflict with the

Evil One. The Evil One says: 'I am the ruler of this world. If I tell people to pick up clubs and strike their brothers, they do it. They listen to me. They do not listen to you. Therefore I am the ruler of the world.'

"The Creator says: 'That is true. But it was I who created mankind. I made the plants and the animals, the birds and the fish, and I love each one of them.'

" 'So tell your people this,' said the Three Messengers to me: 'Never call the Great One who made you, never call Him the Great Spirit. Never call him Ruler. Call him Our Creator. That is His name.'

" 'When you speak of the other one, or speak to him, call him the Tormentor. He will then know that you are aware of his existence. He doesn't want you to know.'

"It was the custom long ago, at the beginning of the crops, for a virgin girl early in the morning while the moon was still in the sky and the dew was on the grass, to go among the new-made hills of corn and sacred tobacco. 'Tell your people,' said the Messengers, 'to continue this custom. It pleases the Creator and helps the crop.'

"Do not fear death. When your time comes to leave this earth, sing your death song and die bravely. If you have lived a good life on this earth, if you repent your sins, you have nothing to fear.

"Because of alien influences among the people, the Six Nations have become divided and disunited. Never again on this earth will they be united as of long ago.

"If a man or a woman has special powers to cure, knowing the plants and the remedies that can be made from them, they should willingly give their services to their people, and they should not try to get rich because they have this knowledge. They should ask nothing but tobacco in return, and they should not waste the plants needlessly. When they take a plant up, they should put some seeds back in the hole, with a little offering of tobacco, and thank the plant for the gift, for the healing gift. As long as they do that, the plant will work good for them, but if they do not do that the plant will cease to help them.

"Some of you, after the death of loved ones, have mourned and wept, sometimes for years and years. You do not realize that you are making great sorrow for the person who has left the earth

and is now in the Sky World. He is unhappy because you are unhappy. His tears flow because your tears flow. So let this be the way, when you hear this message: It takes ten days for the spirit of a dead person to reach the Spirit World. When someone dies, mourn him for ten days. Then prepare a feast and have a place set for him. He will be there, his spirit. And then, when you are done, mourn for him no longer. He is happy where he is. Some day, if you are good, perhaps you will meet him. Let ten days, ten suns, be the length of your mourning.

"There are four great sky trails, one each for the four great races of the world, that go above the earth to the Land of Happy Spirits.

"Some day in the future the world will be destroyed by fire. When that day comes, have no fear. Those who have followed the Good Word will fall asleep and the Creator will lift them up into the sky, to the New Land."

These are a few of the things that Skaniadariyo taught. I have not put them all down, but these are the main things.

Skaniadariyo visited the Land of the Hereafter. One day the Three Messengers came to him. They took his hand, and led him along the Great Sky Road. The First Messenger carried a round object, like glass. He said he had to carry that to protect them where they were going, because without it they could never return.

As they followed the Sky Trail up into the sky, Handsome Lake saw a fat woman on her back in the road. She was struggling, trying to get up, but she was so huge and fat that she could not get upon her feet. She would get so far, and then slip and fall down again. She was continually clutching, clutching at anything to help her to her feet. The Messengers said: "That woman on earth was a very greedy person. She was always trying to get everything for herself. She never helped anybody. Those who are selfish, those who gain their wealth through greed and dishonesty, cannot stand on the Sky Road. They can never reach the Happy Land."

Then the Three Messengers said, "Look, and tell us what you see."

Handsome Lake looked and saw three groups of people. The first group had many people in it. The second group had not so many. The third group had only a few. The Three Messengers

said: "The large group of people are the unbelievers. They do not believe the word of the Creator. The second group are the half-believers. They think one way sometimes, but next day their minds are changed and they think another way. Their minds are not straight. The third group with only a few in it, they are the ones who really believe in the *Gaiwio* with all their hearts."

Beside the Spirit Road he saw a house with bars in the window, a pair of handcuffs, a hangman's noose, and a whip. The Messengers said that those who think the white man's law is better than the Indian's will be punished after death by jail, handcuffs, the hangman's knot, and the whip.

Handsome Lake was asked to look down. He looked and saw the Buffalo Creek Reservation, and it was covered with a hug net like a spider's web. "I think," said Handsome Lake, "that we will lose this reservation to the white man. They will take this country." And not long afterwards it happened as he predicted.

Then the Three Messengers said to Handsome Lake, "Look toward the setting sun." Handsome Lake looked, and he saw a white man with a gun. He had a bayonet and he was jabbing at the ground. He seemed to be very angry. The Three Messengers said: "That white man is fighting some of your people in the West, some of your Indian brothers. He wants you to help him kill them. Do not listen to him. Tell your people not to help the white man destroy other Indian people. Your turn will be next."

Handsome Lake walked upward into the sky with the Messengers. He left the earth and wandered upward. Hanging in the sky he saw a nice house, and there was a man walking around outside it with a little dog. The man turned and looked at Handsome Lake and smiled. Handsome Lake smiled back. The Messengers said: "That man is the Town Burner, *Renadagaius*, whom you call George Washington. He allowed the Six Nations to stay in their native lands instead of driving them to the west. Renadagaius said: 'They have done nothing so terrible, nothing that any other people would not have done, fighting for their country. Let them stay in their own country. We do not need all of it.' Because George Washington did that, he is allowed to live here as a reward. He is the only white man to get so near to Heaven."

In the Upper World, Handsome Lake saw a man approaching

him. The man looked at him and then went by, and then they both turned and faced each other.

The man spoke. He said: "Look. Look at my hands. Look at my feet."

Handsome Lake looked, and he saw wounds. They were still wet with blood.

The man said to Handsome Lake: "I am the one they call Jesus. I tried to tell my people the Good Word. I tried to tell them the will of the Creator. See what they did to me. These wounds are still raw. When the end comes, they will turn to me and hold out their hands. I shall not see them. Tell your people this: If they follow the ways of the white man, they are lost. Tell them to follow their own ways. They are the best."

As Handsome Lake walked along, he saw a man, a tired-looking man, with a shovel, carrying a basket full of earth on his back. He was crawling along the road, putting this earth in a big pile. The Messengers said: "That man, when he was on the earth, sold his country, sold the Indian country. His punishment after death is to move all the land that he sold and put it in the pile over there. You can imagine how long it will take him. That is the punishment of the land-seller, the man who sells the birthright of his people."

As they went along they came to a fork in the road. There was a wide road with the marks of many feet, and there was a little path branching off. The little path had only a few footsteps; these were mostly the steps of children. It led to the lodge of the Good Spirit. The wide road with many footsteps went straight ahead to the land of the Evil One.

For a little distance, the Three Messengers led Handsome Lake along the wide road. They came to a long building made of iron, and it was white hot. He saw a door going in, but there was no door going out, and there were no windows. The House of the Tormentor stretched far into the distance. As they approached they could hear wailing and moaning. The Messengers took him inside and showed him the punishments of people who disobeyed the laws of Our Creator. They were terrible, so terrible I don't want to talk about them. You must use your imagination. There were those who drink firewater—that immoral woman—those who practice witchcraft—those who are vain—those who beat their

wives—those who like to gossip—those who go to white men's beer joints and dances and play around with the fiddle—those who play cards. Their punishments after death are too terrible to tell.

After visiting the House of the Evil One, the Messengers took Handsome Lake back to the narrow path with few footsteps, and led him along it toward the Land of Happy Spirits. Soon he entered a beautiful country. Great forests stretched over the land. The earth was covered with the needles of many pine trees. Among the trees were fruits of all kinds, all ripe. The air smelled sweet with flowers. Along the ground were strawberry plants and other berries. He listened and he heard birds singing, birds of all kinds and all colors. Game was abundant. The rivers were full of fish. The animals and the birds seemed to live together in friendship. It was a happy place.

Three places Handsome Lake visited in the Sky World: the Place of the Spring, the Grassy Place, and the Place of the Trees.

As he walked along he looked and there was his dog that had been dead for some time. The dog recognized him and came running to meet him and jumped up to him. Handsome Lake was happy to see his dog. By that we know that animals, they go to the Land of Spirits, too. We must be kind to animals.

Then Handsome Lake looked, and he saw his own son and his niece who had died. He saw that they were walking arm in arm in the Sky World. They seemed to be happy. Behind them walked two older people whom he recognized. They had died many years before, but during their life on earth they had been kind and good, and he saw them now together in the Sky World. All seemed to be happy.

In the distance Handsome Lake, as he listened, could hear someone singing the song of the Great Feather Dance. The voice sounded familiar. He looked, and it was a man who used to live on earth, a man who had been known as a great singer, who called the people together to perform the Feather Dance. Up in the Sky World he was doing the same thing he had done so well on earth. He was calling the people together to dance the sacred dances.

The Three Messengers pointed out to Handsome Lake his own future home, but he did not enter his house up there in the Sky World. He knew that if he did enter it he would never be able to return to the earth, and his work there was yet unfinished.

After visiting the Land of the Creator, Handsome Lake and the Three Messengers returned over the Sky Trail to the earth again.

Having seen these things in the Sky World, Handsome Lake told them to his people, and many other things not recorded in



HANDSOME LAKE PREACHING IN THE LONGHOUSE

Drawing by Ka-hon-hes

this bead work. He told them for—let me see: One, two, three, four, five, six—ten years he lived at Cornplanter's Town on the Allegheny River. Two years he lived at a place called Cold Spring. Four years he lived at Tonawanda. During all these years he told the will of the Creator to his people, the Senecas.

While he was at Tonawanda, some messengers from Onondaga, the People of the Hills, came to him and said: "We have heard about you. We would like to have you come to Onondaga and tell our people the *Gaiwio*, the Good Word."

Handsome Lake sought advice from the Three Messengers. They said to him: "Go. They are your own Iroquois people, *Ongwe-*

howwe, at Onondaga. It is your duty to go there and tell them the wishes of the Creator. Your presence there will help in His cause. But we must tell you this: There you will sing your death song. There the Fourth Messenger will come and lead you away by the Sky Trail."

So Handsome Lake told his people, the Tonawanda people, what the Three Messengers had revealed to him. The Tonawanda people did not want him to go, especially the young people, the children. They loved him so much. When Handsome Lake delivered his answer to the Onondaga messengers, the Tonawanda children tried to persuade Handsome Lake not to go. They held a little council of their own, these children of the Senecas, which they invited Handsome Lake to attend. But when they tried to speak, begging him to stay, they were so full of emotion they could not utter a word. There were two boys among them who had very strong wills. These two the other children appointed to speak for them. "Certainly," they said, "these two will be able to speak without breaking down." So the two boys approached Handsome Lake and begged him to stay. But Handsome Lake said, "I must go."

Many footsteps went with Handsome Lake. Many people followed him. They wondered if it was true that he would leave this earth, as he said, at Onondaga.

They went toward the rising sun, toward the Onondaga country. The trail led to the place along the Genesee River, the long-since abandoned town of Ganowages, where Handsome Lake had once lived. There they cooked their supper, sat down and ate, and retired for the night. That night Handsome Lake had a vision. In that vision he saw an old trail covered over with grass.

At the end of the second day they camped at a long-abandoned Seneca town by a lake, near where the city of Geneva now stands. They cooked their supper and talked things over. That night Handsome Lake had another vision. He saw a woman. She was speaking, uttering bad things, for she was a witch. It was she who afterwards caused him to die. Next morning he told the people his dream, and told them who the woman was. Then they all went on toward the village of Onondaga.

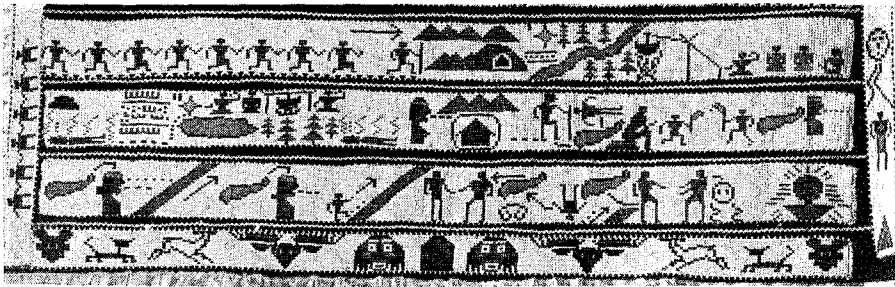
When Handsome Lake got to Onondaga, he was tired and very ill, so ill that he could hardly stand. The Onondaga people welcomed him and tried to make his comfortable. They thought:

"Perhaps a lacrosse game will cheer him up. Perhaps it will cure him." So they held a game of lacrosse for him.

But Handsome Lake said: "I am going to the New World. I see a plain pathway before me. Soon I shall walk upon it."

It was not long before Handsome Lake became so ill that they took him into a house, and there he died. But before he went away, he said: "Those who believe in me and follow my teachings, when their time comes to leave the earth, I will meet them on the Sky Path. I will welcome them with outstretched arms to the Land of the Creator."

Then the Fourth Messenger came and led him to the Land of Our Creator, where he awaits you.*



HANDSOME LAKE WALKS THE SKY PATH

The last three sections of the belt are shown here. The symbols in the margin refer to the Six Nations or Iroquois, their clans and their customs.
Courtesy American Philosophical Society

*Handsome Lake died August 10, 1815.